

FAREWELL | LAURIE SNIDER

She gave last lesson on how to live

By KIM CHANDLER
News staff writer

Sometimes elementary-age students will wave nervously when they see their teacher away from school. Sometimes there will be a quick hug.

Laurie Snider's students at Helena Intermediate School always came running to hug her, said friend and fellow teacher Shelli Abernathy.

Snider started teaching gifted students at Helena Intermediate School in 2006, working with students where the chief challenge is to prevent boredom.

"She was tenacious about wanting to know things herself. So she had an understanding of their needs and their need to be challenged," Abernathy said. "She could make those subjects come alive for them."

But while she loved teaching, the loves of her life



"She made us laugh until tears. The belly laugh that made your stomach muscles hurt," said lifelong friend Hope Haydon.

were her children — Sarah, 16, and Will, 10 — and her husband, Jim, friends said.

"You always heard about 'My Sarah' and 'My Will' and 'My Jim.' You could just see the pride on her face," Abernathy said.

The couple, who were married nine years, met when Jim, a contractor, came to do some work on her home. Within six weeks, he knew she was the one for him, he said. "We were just like soulmates from the beginning."

The couple enjoyed taking camping trips across the Southeast. Laurie Snider was active at Liberty Baptist Church. She loved people so much that a quick trip to the store could turn into a long conversation with someone she just met.

Hope Haydon, who had been friends with Laurie since the third grade, said it's difficult to describe how compassionate and tenderhearted her friend was to everyone she met.

"She made you feel special and was always quick to point out your gifts. At the center of our friendship was laughter. She made us laugh

until tears. The belly laugh that made your stomach muscles hurt," Haydon said.

And even when her body was being attacked by cancer, Snider would ask you about your day instead of complaining about hers, friends said.

Snider was diagnosed with uterine cancer 2½ years ago. She fought the cancer through chemotherapy and radiation and went into remission for nine months. Her red hair began to grow again, and things seemed perfect, Abernathy said, until the cancer returned. Determined to fight, Snider insisted on not knowing her prognosis even until the very end, her husband said.

She was determined to keep teaching and went to school walking with a cane and later in a wheelchair as the cancer invaded her bones and slowly paralyzed

her. But she didn't want pity, Abernathy said.

Her co-workers rallied around, donating their unused sick days to her.

Teachers at Helena shielded the students from how bad her illness was, and the students showered their beloved teacher with homemade get-well cards. Laurie Snider kept teaching at Helena until spring 2009. She died on Sept. 5. She was 46.

Jim Snider said his wife hoped to pass a simple philosophy about living on to her students, as well as her own children.

"Be honest. Be the best person you can. Always do your best. And you won't have any regrets."

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